

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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R 061038Z APR 77
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SECSTATE WASHDC 1931

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEHRAN 2961

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1 (DECONTROL IN 30 YEARS)
TAGS: SHUM IR UK
SUBJ: BRITISH CONSIDERATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN

REF: LONDON 4937, STATE 74968

1. APPRECIATE LONDON REFTEL INFO ON BRITISH ATTITUDES TOWARD CIVIL RIGHTS IN IRAN AND FCO CONSIDERATION BEING GIVEN TO WEIGHING IN ON THIS QUESTION. WE AGREE WITH WISDOM OF FCO DESIRE TO KEEP THESE MATTERS IN PERSPECTIVE AND IN PARTICULAR NOT EQUATE IRANIAN REGIME TO ALL OTHERS IN THE AREA, DESCRIBED AS "BRITTLE". AS DEPT AWARE, WE PERIODICALLY EXCHANGE VIEWS ON THIS SUBJECT WITH OUR BRITISH COLLEAGUES HERE. IN MOST RECENT DISCUSSION BETWEEN CHARGE AND BRITISH AMB PARSONS, LATTER SAID THAT HE WAS WILLING TO APPROACH EITHER THE IRANIAN MINISTER OF COURT OR THE PRIMIN EXPRESSING HMG CONCERNS ABOUT CIVIL RIGHTS SITUATION IN IRAN AND URGING PROCEDURAL REFORM IN DEALING WITH THESE MATTERS. IN SO REPORTING TO FOREIGN OFFICE, HOWEVER, PARSONS NOTED INFORMATION THAT HAD COME TO HIS AND OUR ATTENTION THAT THERE WAS A POSSIBILITY MARTIN ENNALS OF AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL MAY HAVE BEEN TO IRAN TO TALK TO THE SHAH. PARSONS SAID HE HAD NO WASY OF KNOWING FOR CERTAIN WHETHER THIS WAS TRUE, BUT THAT IF ENNALS HAD BEEN HERE HE WAS CONCERNED THAT HIS APPROACH
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TO THE GOI WOULD BE SEEN AS THE CONCERTING OF EFFORT BETWEEN HMG AND AMENSTY INTERNATIONAL, AND HE DID NOT THINK THIS WOULD BE WISE. PARSONS SAID THAT HE HAS NOT HEARD FURTHER FROM THE FCO WHICH IS APPARENTLY MULLING THIS OVER BEFORE SENDING HIM FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS.

2. IN THE MEANTIME, THE FOREGOING CAVEAT NOTWITHSTANDING,

WE QUESTION THE FCO COMMENT THAT IT MAY BE WISER TO LET OUTSIDE NON-GOVERNMENTAL BODIES SUCH AS AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL DO THE WORK. CERTAINLY RECENT HISTORY OF IRANIAN RELATIONSHIP WITH AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL MAKES IT UNLIKELY, FOR THE NEAR FUTURE AT LEAST, THAT A.O. WOULD BE WELCOME TO VISIT IRAN ON THE TERMS A.O. WANTS, OR WILLING TO VISIT IRAN ON THE TERMS A.O. PERCEIVES GOI WOULD GRANT. BESIDES, WE DISAGREE WITH IMPLICATION THAT AN OUTSIDE ORGANIZATION SUCH AS A.I. HAS THE FACTS, OR JUDGES THEM, AS WELL AS HMG OR USG. IT IS IN MANY WAYS DEPLORABLE THAT SO MANY PEOPLE (INCLUDING BRITISH M.P.S) APPARENTLY BASE THEIR THINKING ON PATENTLY EXAGGERATED AND INACCURATE REPORTS, SUCH AS AMNESTY'S CHARGE THAT IRAN IS HOLDING 100,000 OR 200,000 POLITICAL PRISONERS. A GREATER INVOLVEMENT BY HMG MIGHT BROADEN THE SOURCES OF INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO M.P.S AND OTHER OPINION MOLDERS IN BRITAIN.

3. HMG, LIKE USG, GETS IMMEDIATE ATTENTION OF IRANIAN POLICYMAKERS, UNLIKE PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS. IT IS OF COURSE IMPORTANT NOT TO ABUSE THIS ATTENTION OR ENDER EFFORTS COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE. WE AGREE WITH LUCAS THAT HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION HAS IMPROVED ERE IN RECENT YEARS AND THAT IT WOULD BE MISTAKE FOR BRITISH TO TRY TO MAINTAIN CLOSER OR OPEN CONTACT WITH "THE OPPOSITION"--EVEN IF THEY COULD FIND IT. IT IS A FACT THAT IRAN IN 1977 MAY HAVE A LOT OF PEOPLE WHO GIVE ONLY FORMAL ALLEGIANCE TO THE REGIME AND EXPRESS A VARIETY OF DOUBTS ABOUT THE WISDOM OF ITS POLICIES IN PRIVATE, BUT THEY ARE NOT A CONFIDENTIAL

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COHESIVE GROUP IN TERMS OF EITHER ORGANIZATION OR CRITICISM THEY DIRECT AT GOI AND ARE NOT PREPARED TO STAND UP AND BE COUNTED AS "THE OPPOSITION", LOYAL OR OTHERWISE. OVERSEAS CRITICS ASIDE, THIS PRETTY WELL REDUCES IDENTIFIABLE OPPOSITION TO THE TERRORISTS AND THEIR ALLIES WHO OPERATE IN SECRET.

4. ON THE OTHER HAND WE AGREE WITH SHREWD FCO JUDGEMENT THAT DEMONSTRATED SENSITIVITY OF THE SHAH TO HUMAN RIGHTS CRITICISM ALSO GIVES A LEVER TO HIS CRITICS. WE BELIEVE

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HMG, AS USG, CAN PLAY A USEFUL ROLE IN MOTIVIATING IRANIANS TO IMPROVE ASPECTS OF THEIR PERFORMANCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN AS PART OF THE PROCESS OF IMPROVING THEIR IMAGE IN THE WEST. BRITISH AND WE AGREE THAT IT WOULD NOT BE USEFUL TO URGE IRAN'S PRISONS BE OPENED FOR INSPECTION INDISCRIMINATELY TO ANY AND ALL WHO ASK (INDEED BRITISH HAVE OPINED THEY DOUBT UK ITSELF WOULD TAKE KINDLY TO SUCH SUGGESTIONS). HOWEVER, THERE IS GOOD WORK TO BE DONE IN COOPERATION WITH IRANIAN EMB IN LONDON (AS WITH EMB IN WASHINGTON) IN IDENTIFYING PEOPLE OR GROUPS OF PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT ALREADY COMMITTED ON THE QUESTION AND WOULD BE OPENMINDED IF INVITED BY GOI TO VISIT IRAN AND SEE FOR THEMSELVES. IN BRITAIN THIS MIGHT INCLUDE PARLIAMENTARY BACK-BENCHERS, LEADING TRADE UNION PERSONALITIES, AND PROVINCIAL NEWSPAPER PEOPLE. IRANIANS ARE CONCERNED ON THIS QUESTION, AND THEIR CONCERN COULD BE HEIGHTENED AND WORKED UPON TACTFULLY. MAIN CONCERN OF BRITISH AMB, ON THE OTHER HAND, IS THAT HE BE THE COORDINATOR OF HMG EFFORTS IN THIS FIELD, RATHER THAN PEOPLE ARRIVING AT DIFFERENT TIMES, WITH VARIETY OF MANDATES, FROM LONDON. WE AGREE. POINT MIGHT BE MADE TO LUCAS.

5. WE ARE POUCHING TO LONDON SOME RECENT CONVERSATIONS
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EMBOFFS HAVE HAD ON HUMAN RIGHTS WITH INFLUENTIAL IRANIANS IN MFA AND RESURGENCE PARTY.

6. FYI-ANOTHER BRITISH IDEA IS THAT IT WOULD HELP TO MAKE BRITISH PUBLIC MORE AWARE OF WHAT IRAN MEANS TO BRITAIN IN ECONOMIC TERMS, USING ARGUMENTS SUCH AS, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT ONE MUNITIONS FACTORY PROJECT CURRENTLY OPERATING HERE MEANS 150,000 JOBS IN BRITAIN. WE

SUSPECT THIS APPROACH SUGGESTS ITSELF TO FCO (AS HUDD'S
COMMENTS TO LABOR M.P.S INDICATED, REFTTEL) AT LEAST IN
PART BECAUSE BRITISH REALIZE THEY ARE THEMSELVES VULNER-
ABLE TO REVERSE CRITICISM IN CONNECTION WITH NORTHERN
IRELAND. INDEED, SHAH AND IRANIAN NEWSPAPERS HAVE MADE
SEVERAL ATTEMPTS TO DEMONSTRATE US IS BY NO MEANS
PERFECT ON MANY HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES--BUT BRITISH CASE
WITH NORTHERN IRELAND PRESENTS AN EVEN EASIER TARGET.
WE SHOULD PROBABLY THEREFORE NOT BE TOO HARD WITH OUR
BRITISH FRIENDS IF THEY SEEK TO SOFT-PEDAL THEIR OWN
APPROACHES TO IRANIANS ON THIS ISSUE.
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